

# Peer Counseling 101

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**Summary:** Roxas lives a steady life with his older brother Cloud, until he accidentally blows up the school's only laboratory. To stop expulsion, he's forced to do the Peer Influence Program, where he is assigned to change a delinquent named Axel into a good boy. Problem? Axel is actually a sexy, misunderstood guy with an artistic soul, who happens to be gay. RoxasxAxel CloudxZack

## **\*Chapter 1\*: Chapter 1**

Hola! Author here! I know I have other stories in waiting, but I just HAD to write this story. Plus, I don't have any Roxas x Axel stories. :(

But I hope you can forgive me! My other stories are making progress!

**Rating:** T for kissing, suggestive themes, crude humor, smoking, drinking, nudity, and sexual fantasies

**Warning:** This is a boy x boy story. Don't like? Leave now while you can! ;)

**Disclaimer:** I DON'T OWN KINGDOM HEARTS BUT HOW ABOUT THAT KH3 COMING OUT! 3

And that's all with my usual stuff.

So enjoy! :)

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### **Roxas**

I could feel it. I only had a matter of seconds left before my older brother would burst in my room with an almost-scary amount of happiness and say-

"RISE AND SHINE, ROXY! IT'S A NEW DAY! TIME FOR SCHOOL!" Cloud exclaimed, gleaming with joy as he turned on the bright lights in my room and left to go to the kitchen. I groaned.

I hate morning people.

I rolled over, slowly opened my eyes, and screamed. I quickly sat up in bed, breathing heavy. Cloud held his bright grin on his face, as if he didn't just have a devil face on a few moments ago. "Once again, Roxas, get up!" And he walked out of the room again. I sighed. Another day in basic school.

It wasn't that I hated school. Education made up a large part of my life. I excel in academics, am at the top of my class ranks, and have colleges all over the island begging for me. But it was for this sole purpose that I dislike going to school.

It was boring, average, a lack of a challenge. Every day was predictable. And no excitement happens in my life.

Ever since our mother Tifa moved to Vegas to become a rich stripper and dad went M.I.A, I was forced to live with my eccentric, twenty-seven year old brother Cloud. He made a living from accounting, which allowed him to be home often and take care of me, his sixteen year old brother Roxas.

Cloud looked a lot like me, since we both take on a lot from our dad, Rufus. However, Cloud's outgoing personality and bright smile attracted a lot of people to him, boys and girls, even though he was gay. He always attracted attention unintentionally and intentionally. As a result he could never be single for longer than a few weeks, always bringing new guys over and sneaking them in as if I never notice. His last break up was a really strong one, though. And he's been single for about a year now. I wonder if he'll ever find someone like Sephiroth again.

Me? I am nothing like my brother. I'm pessimistic, sarcastic, usually quiet, and have no tolerance for stupidity. Even though I look just like my brother and would be considered as attractive as him, my personality tended to repel others, which is what I intend anyway, so I certainly don't mind. The only person that has looked past my horrid anomaly were my two friends, Riku and Yuffie.

I trudged down the stairs to the kitchen, where Cloud had already whipped me up a batch of pancakes and some bacon.

"Good morning, Roxy! Orange juice or coffee?" Cloud asked, holding both pitchers up in the air.

"How about a pitchfork," I retorted.

"Okay, orange juice it is!" And Cloud poured the juice into a glass and gave it to me. "Remember those new neighbors I was telling you about that I heard we were having?"

"Sure," I said through a bunch of food in my mouth.

Cloud peeked out the window, narrowing his eyes. "They've finally moved in. I don't think I'll like these people. I heard a twenty-nine year old man is living with his mom. What kind of sense is that? Dude sounds like he needs a job. I need to further investigate. Find out if my new neighbors are low-lives."

There goes Cloud being nosy as usual. However, my curiosity peaked as I looked out the window myself and saw men moving large boxes into the house, while a lady with a white sundress and a braided ponytail stood and watched. I only saw her backside.

I shrugged, finishing up my pancakes and going back upstairs to get ready. I did my regular, daily, predictable routine: shower, brush my teeth, groom, put my cleanest clothes on, grab my books and head out for the bus.

"Remember to get the mail before you come home today!" Cloud reminded as I exited the door.

As soon as I climbed onto the bus I plopped myself down in the middle next to my friends.

Riku smirked, laughing lightly. "Hey. Your brother is waving at you."

I groaned. "I don't know why that man is always so happy."

Yuffie thumped me on the arm. I flinched and rubbed it. "Maybe he's not happy at all, Roxas. Maybe he acts like that so you don't worry about him. Have you ever thought of that, hmm?"

I rolled my eyes. I knew she had a point but I'm the last person to admit when someone is right.

As we pulled up to the school, everyone on the bus started grabbing their things, performing last-minute study look-overs, kissing their significant

others goodbye, and becoming sad because it was another day of school. Monday.

The three of us hopped off and slowly walked towards the campus, observing our surroundings like we usually do.

"Check it out. Seems like Miss Bitch-In-Red is having some relationship problems," Yuffie mumbled to us, pointing to said girl's directions. She was talking about the popular girl Kairi, a girl with red hair is known and "loved" around the campus, head cheerleader, and supposedly the prettiest girl in school. She's also a bitch and dates the school's leading athlete Tidus. But now they were yelling at each other. Seems like not everything is going perfect with Kairi like usual.

"Whoever said wishes don't come true," Yuffie laughed, high-fiving Riku.

"Hey, what's up with you Roxas? Why're you so quiet, hmm?" Riku asked.

I shook my head. "This lab we have today... I'm scared. I have no idea what I'm doing, guys. I didn't study the material! Something's going to go wrong, and I'm just thinking of how bad it's actually going to be."

"Roxas, chill bro. You're #1 in class rank. You'll figure this out with your smarts, okay? Just relax and laugh at Kairi with us. Tidus ripped her shirt," Riku comforted.

I couldn't help but smile as my friends laughed at our arch-enemy. Usually I would laugh with them but today I had too many things on my mind.

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## Cloud

I quietly watched Titanic in utter boredom and sadness, as I was constantly reminded of the good times I had with my ex after every kiss. I popped a couple of popcorn in my mouth, sighing. I need to find some better pastimes.

And then the doorbell rang.

*I have a special delivery?* I thought, and got up to go answer the door. But when I peeked through the peephole it wasn't a mailman. It was the weird neighbor from next door. I second-thought opening the door, hesitated, and then opened, plastering a big fake grin on my face.

"Hey! You're the new neighbor! Nice to meet you!" I gleamed.

She grinned back genuinely. "Oh, nice to meet you too! I was just wondering if you could help me move in with all my boxes? My son can only do so much and I don't want to put too much of a load on him."

I thought about it. And I ended up walking next door to an empty house full of boxes. I heard thuds from upstairs. I assumed that it was her son helping out.

As I was helping unpack, I went ahead and tried getting to know my new neighbor. "So, Aerith, you say?"

"Yep. My real name is Aeris, but back then I had a lisp so it ended up coming out as Aerith. Eventually the name stuck, and now I just naturally tell everyone to call me that." She smiled.

"Okay Aerith, I'm Cloud."

"Do you live alone?"

"Oh I don't live alone. I take care of my younger brother, Roxas, but he's at school right now, so daylight hours I tend to be the loner of the house, haha!" I said, slightly feeling bad about myself.

Aerith nodded, understanding. "Oh that's good. My son loves being alone but I don't want him to. You see, ever since I was diagnosed with arthritis, he came to live with me and refuses to let me do anything by myself. That's him, extremely protective. He makes me feel so old sometimes." She blushed.

So that explains why a twenty-nine year old man is living with his mother.

"How old are you? You seem a little young to be having arthritis," I observed.

She smiled. "I'm turning fifty soon."

I widened my eyes. She nodded, dismissing my shock. "All those mako teas I drink every day do wonders to my skin." She laughed.

"Give me some!" And we both giggled. I think I actually liked Aerith.

"My son could definitely use some company. He works too much, doesn't give time for himself, you know? Can you believe he's turning 30 soon and still hasn't had a special someone since junior year of high school?"

"Maybe he's a loner kind-of guy," I inferred. "Is he always home?"

"Oh no! He owns a car mechanics place a couple blocks from here. Since he's the boss, he can make his schedule. And sometimes he just chooses to spend a lot of time with me to make sure I'm doing okay." She sighed. "Ever since his dad died when he was a twelve, he started being the man of the house. Took on his dad's principles. Don't let your woman work. Provide for the house. Focus on work. Better to be single than to be gay..."

"Is there a particular reason he can't find anybody special to him? Is he ugly?"

"No it's not that. He actually attracts many people. But rather... he questions his sexuality and he doesn't want to find out something he doesn't like so... he just avoids love all together."

"Oh... sounds very insecure." I hate homophobic people.

"Well, not insecure, per say. More like-"

"Mom, where do you want this painting to be mounted?" a man with a deep voice asked. Both of us looked up only to see a strikingly-handsome man with aquamarine eyes and spiky black hair. His biceps were flexing due to him carrying a large and heavy painting with ease, and he had a blank expression. He didn't give me not even a glance. But me? I gawked at him. Almost drooled. He was a breath-taking sight.

"Oh thank you, Zack! Just go ahead and put it next to my bed. I'll handle it later," Aerith dismissed.

"Mom," he asked more firmly. "Where do you want me to mount this? You're not doing it on your own."

She sighed. "Well I suppose in the living room would be nice."

He walked downstairs and went into a different room.

Aerith, oblivious to my sudden attraction to her son, continued our conversation. "So, Cloud, what do you do for a living?"

"I, uh, I um, eh, mm..." I sputtered out, trying to find words but couldn't. Zack was his name. Well Zack was the most beautiful person I have ever met on this planet. I have got to talk to him. Poor thing must be so lonely without someone to share his feelings with. I can fix that.

"Hey Cloud, could you go ahead and check up on Zack for me? See if he isn't pushing himself too hard. I don't want him to hurt himself," Aerith whispered to me. I quickly nodded. I would be happy to go have an excuse to talk to Zack.

I got up, fixed up my hair a little bit, and coolly walked over to the living room where he was located. Sure enough, he was mounting the painting with no sign of struggle or strain, and not a single sweat released. When it seemed as if he didn't notice my presence, I cleared my throat. He continued working.

I cleared my throat again and said, "Hey."

Finally, he glanced over at me, looking me over while he was screwing a nail on the wall, and then looked back to his work.

"Your mother wanted me to-"

"I'm fine. You can leave now. I got this."

I blinked, a bit taken aback by the bluntness in his words. But I smiled and ignored it. "You're not very friendly, are you."

He didn't answer me but just kept drilling.

"You, uh... need any help?" I asked, looking around the room. It was a big house, probably bigger than mine. Nice model, roomy kitchen. I should've bought this one when I had the chance.

Zack sighed and stopped drilling. He turned and stared at me. "Is there anything you need?"

"What?" I asked, turning back to him.

"Is there anything you need? Is there a reason you're still here when I asked you to leave?" Zack asked, his lips pursed.

The harshness in his words was like a slap to my face. "Oh. Well uh... I guess I should go-"

"You should." And he turned back to the painting and started drilling again, his expression still blank as it has been the entire time.

I slowly nodded and left the room. Aerith gave me a smile. "So? Is he frustrating himself?"

"Oh I think he'll be just fine, Aerith. Zack has everything under control."

"Really? But-"

"Hey," Zack called out. He stood at the entrance of the living room, facing us.

"Yeah?" I answered.

"Aerith isn't a pity party. She doesn't need help from strangers nor ever will. You're better off not coming back here." And he went back to the painting. I bit my bottom lip, trying to hold in tears. Funny how the words of an attractive stranger can hurt me so much.

Aerith shook her head, reaching out for me.

I quickly dodged her hands and fake-smiled, pretending everything was okay. "It's fine, Aerith. I have to go back home anyway. Dinner needs to be ready for when Roxas comes home, you know?" I feigned a laugh.

"Zack can be a little rude sometimes, but please don't let him ruin our friendship-"

"Have a nice day, Aerith!" I called, as I exited through the front door and closed it. I took a deep shaky breath with my eyes closed, opened them, and became happy-go-lucky Cloud again, heading back to my house and pretending none of this shit ever happened.

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## Roxas

I plopped down in my seat, nervous as hell, just trying to get this chemistry lab over and done with so I can go home and sleep. Unfortunately, I have no friends in my chemistry class, so I was forced to feel anxious on my own.

Namine sat down next to me. She was a girl that had a crush on me since seventh grade. She told me her feelings freshman year. When I told her I was gay, she nervously laughed it off and pretended she never said anything. Doesn't mean she doesn't occasionally try to flirt with me or be my friend.

"Nervous?" she asked, smiling.

I nodded.

"Don't worry. This isn't so bad. Worse case scenario is you blow up the school, haha!" she assured. I laughed nervously with her. I doubt that would ever happen, but still. I wasn't exactly a lucky person.

Kairi waltzed into the room with a different shirt on from what she had this morning. Her lackey best friend Selphie came trotting along behind her. And they both sat down in the front, where they could get all the attention from horny boys. Sure enough, every guy there gawked at them, mainly Kairi and her extremely short shorts, leaving little to the imagination.

The teacher, as usual, came rushing in late, carelessly dropping her books and purse on her desk. She clapped her hands. "You know the deal everyone! Lab day! Get your gear, find a table and partner, and follow the instructions on the board! Remember, you are to make methyl lithium. Remember to make the compound under the gas sealant next to the window! Exposure to oxygen can cause violent explosions!"

Everyone half-listened to her as they picked up their lab coats and goggles and grouped up with someone. Namine waved me over, so I complied and became her partner.

Namine, as intelligent as she was, went ahead and took a head start. I just stared. Usually I actively participate in group projects or labs because I get the job done correctly. But this particular lab I wasn't prepared for. Therefore, I was going to interfere as little as possible.

I heard Kairi yelp as her compound started to foam rapidly. "Am I doing this right?!"

The teacher laughed. "You may have removed the water a little too quickly but everything is okay, Kairi. Go ahead and store it in an inert atmosphere for a few minutes now."

Namine slid the flask over to me. "There. I went ahead and created the compound myself. Now this is a very pyrophoric, which means highly reactive. Drain *every single drop of H<sub>2</sub>O* out of the compound before placing it in the gas sealant." She took another flask to make the second required compound. I gulped, and attempted to do as she told me to.

*Drain the water. Not so bad*, I thought. There were a couple droplets of water I couldn't quite grab, so I just left it in there and headed for the gas sealant. What's a couple of droplets going to do? It's just water.

I placed the flask under the gas sealant and waited. After about two minutes. A loud whistling sound could be heard coming from the flask.

Everyone looked around, confused. The teacher stopped, widened her eyes, and turned to the gas sealant, and then me, standing next to it. "ROXAS!"

"Yes?" I answered.

"GET THAT FLASK OUT OF THIS BUILDING NOW!"

"What?!" I shouted.

She ran to the gas sealant, grabbed the flask and ran towards the window. But right as she was going to throw it-

It exploded.

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"Roxas, do you realize how many people you put in danger due to your lack of following instructions?" Principal Xemnas asked.

I just stared at my lap. It was the day after the explosion I caused, which blew up the school's only laboratory, a few classrooms, and caused severe burns to the teacher and three students near the flask. Luckily, no one was disfigured or killed during the explosion, but severe damages to the school and some wounds to others made it just as bad.

"Roxas, I have come to find out that you are one of the school's brightest students so I expect comprehensive understanding coming out of you when I say this. The punishment for what you have done is grounds for *expulsion*."

I gasped and gawked at the principal. "You mean... get expelled?! But why?! I didn't do this intentionally! And I'm the best student here why would you get rid of your best student?"

"I was not finished, Roxas," Principal Xemnas stated calmly. I shut up instantly.

"The punishment for what you have done is grounds for expulsion. However, do to your high academic records and excellent conduct, the school district will not expel you."

"Oh thank goodness-" I started.

"But"

"But?"

"On one condition."

"Something tells me I won't like this condition," I mumbled, sliding from my seat.

"The school district of Destiny Islands has opened a new program called Peer Influence. It is designed to help the delinquents of the island become college-bound, productive members of society after six months of solid guidance from excelling students. It is a very well-funded program indeed and has a good cause. Many students have volunteered to be a peer counselor. However, there is one problem child that no one seems to be able to help."

"Problem child?" I asked, already feeling like I know what's coming next.

"Yes, problem child. He has been in and out of juvi since he was in fifth grade. He has a criminal record, a big count of truancy, has been held back many times, has a parole officer, and a lack of parental guidance. He's now an eighteen year old sophomore, same grade as you, and no one can get through to him."

"So what are you saying, Principal Xemnas?" I asked slowly.

"You are to become his peer counselor and curve his bad ways in exchange for staying here at Destiny High."

"Become his peer counselor?! Principal Xemnas, I have no tolerance for ignorance, let alone an ignorant delinquent that is bound to go to prison when he grows up! Do you honestly think it's fair to rely on me to change him when no one else could?!"

It's this or expulsion. Pick one, Roxas."

"You're right, sir. It seems best if I move to a new school district. Expulsion seems like the best decision for everyone. Thank you for showing me light, sir!" I got up and shook his hand and started to exit.

"Not so fast, Roxas."

I stopped in my tracks.

"We have already contacted your guardian and informed him of the two options set up for you." Principal Xemnas held up a registration form. "You see, you're already signed up to be a peer counselor. I just called you in so you can meet your new pupil for the first time here."

"You WHAT?! I never consented to any of this! He does not have the right to make any big decision for me like this! He is not my guardian he is my BROTHER! He doesn't know left from right WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?!"

Xemnas laughed. "This won't be as bad as you think, Roxas. Look at it as a new opportunity to explore the different elements of society. A new experience to share to your grandchildren one day."

I shook my head. "I can't believe this."

"Oh, believe indeed, Roxas."

I sighed. "So who is this pupil I'm taking on anyway?"

As if on cue, the door slammed open, showing a guy in handcuffs walk in with two police officers. I gulped. Oh hell no.

"So this is my new guy? Looks weaker than the last one." He turned around and held up his handcuffs. One of the police officers unlocked it and directed him to the seat next to me. The boy put his chin in his hand, and smirked at me.

The guy had bright, spiky, fiery-red hair and tattoos of teardrops under both eyes. He was really tall and skinny, but looked like he could hold his ground. He had bright emerald eyes and shiny white teeth, which were flashing at me in his smile.

"Roxas, this is Axel, you're new pupil you are taking under your wing. Axel, this is Roxas, your fourth peer counselor. Please behave yourself for him and do not put him in any harm's way, do you understand?"

Axel laughed, closing his eyes and sliding down in seat, his head facing the ceiling. "You're cute Roxas. I promise I won't cause you too much trouble." He turned to be and smirked devilishly. "Of course, the best promises are the ones that were meant to be broken."

I gulped.

"Axel, shake hands with him."

Axel held out his hand. I stared at it. What kind of vile things has he done with that hand that he is rubbing onto me? I can't believe this was happening to me. I can't do this. This would be breaking my moral values.

"No Principal Xemnas. I can't do this. It's... it's too overwhelming."

Axel shrugged and pulled out a cigarette in his pocket, digging in his other pocket for a lighter.

"Hey where did he get that?" one of the police officers shouted.

Axel laughed. "Man, police officers are the easiest to pickpocket." He turned to me. "Want one?"

I widened my eyes and gawked at him for having the audacity to ask me such a question.

"I was kidding, blondie," Axel laughed. Axel found his lighter and lit his cigarette. Xemnas quickly yanked it out of his mouth and tossed it out the window. "Hey! You owe me a new cig, man."

"Roxas, please shake his hand. You must comply to my directions," Xemnas informed. I rolled my eyes and hesitantly shook hands with Axel.

"I masturbate with this hand, you know," Axel told me bluntly. I yelped and quickly pulled my hand out of his grip, squeezing loads of hand sanitizer on to it. Axel found this hilarious and decided to burst out laughing. "Man, I love fucking with you people! Everyone knows you masturbate with the left hand not the right, blondie."

I groaned. Can this man take anything seriously?

"Now Axel, I advise you follow the instructions of Roxas. If this counselor doesn't go well, then you will be placed in a group home with other kids just like you and tutoring."

"Like I give a shit," Axel mumbled, closing his eyes and leaning back against the seat.

"Now, hopefully you two will learn to get along and eventually become the best of friends. Roxas, if you ever need anything, just come to my office and I can set up an appointment."

I rolled my eyes.

"This meeting is over. Axel, you're free from juvi in order for Roxas to have easy access to you, so you're going home today. Roxas, I'll give you Axel's information so you can contact him whenever you want."

Trust me, I'll never contact him by choice.

"Going home? What the hell, why am I never told any of this? No this is bullshit," Axel snapped.

Bullshit? Why would anyone be mad to go home?

"Axel, behave."

Axel got up and slammed the chair towards Xemnas' desk. "Fuck you." And he left the office, the police quickly running after Axel.

"Axel has a hard home life. He's not always... excited to go home."

I slowly nodded, pretending to care.

I just know I hate my life.

Six months to go. Zero fucks left.

## **\*Chapter 2\*: Chapter 2**

### **Roxas**

I looked over the contacts paper Xemnas gave me, groaning in remorse for myself. This man I have to positively influence happens to live in Over Street. The street most notorious for drive-by's, gangs roaming around, theft, crack-houses, and crappy police patrolling. And I was required to go there at least four times a week to help Axel.

"I can't believe you did this to me, Cloud. I'll never forgive you for this," I moaned.

Cloud shook his head. "Don't do the crime if you can't pay the time."

"WHAT CRIME?! It was an accident, damn it!" I shouted.

"Hey," Cloud said, turning towards me and waving his spatula in the air. "Inside voices."

I sighed, sliding down in my seat. "Well can you at least drive me there and pick me up? I have to go to his house four times a week and I want to get it done ASAP by starting today."

Cloud laughed loudly. "Roxy, you got me fucked up! You actually think I'm going to risk my life driving you through the hood?! Who do you think I am?! Sorry, bud. You're on your own here. I value my life too much!" Cloud wiped a falling tear.

"But it's okay to risk mine by walking there?! The bus only drops me off at the front of the street! I have to walk to the way down to Axel's house!"

"Now is the time to consider taking up a religion for hope, my brother. I heard Buddhism is doing really well for some people."

I threw a nearby spoon at Cloud for his annoying sarcasm. Unfortunately, it missed. He had no pity for me whatsoever. He just saw all of this as easy entertainment. Won't be all fun and games when your brother turns up DEAD from a gunshot from the local gang.

I trudged towards the door, grabbing my \$1.50 for a bus ticket and house keys. "Any last words before I die?" I asked, my hand on the doorknob.

"Yeah. Can you stop by Publix and get milk on the way back?" Cloud replied.

I grimaced in disbelief and stormed out of the house, not even bothering to close the door. I walked down the street to the bus stop and ran when I saw the bus pull up. I dropped the \$1.50 in it.

"Where to?" the bus lady asked blandly.

"Over Street," I answered. She gave a quick dry laugh, looked me over, and started to drive.

I roamed the streets cautiously, glancing behind me every ten or so steps. I trembled at every man who walked down the street. Old ladies sitting in front of their houses shook their head at me, already recognizing new, vulnerable meat when they see it. One group of guys sitting on the car trunk, smoking weed eyed me down. I made sure not to give any eye contact and walked forward quickly. A car passed by with shouting people and I froze. But when the car drove by I got to see the man driving it was just rapping extremely loud to the music he was blasting.

*Here it is! House 102*, I thought, and walked onto the driveway, taking in the house. It was run-down and displayed many signs of neglect. One of the windows were taped up and bars were applied to every window. Graffiti was all over the front of the house, there were only a few brown tufts of grass left on the dirt. The sidewalks were chipping off and uneven. The car parked outside was a dented 1990 Toyota Corolla. I gulped, walked up to the front door, and pressed the door bell. After about five minutes of waiting, I realized it didn't work. So I knocked. After three minutes, I repeatedly banged, and called for Axel.

Eventually, a man who looked to be in his early thirties opened the door. He had a cigar in his mouth, bags under his bright green eyes, a snarl on his lips, furrowed eyebrows showing aggression, and short spiky red hair, not as bright and long as Axel's.

He pulled out his cigar, tapped it, and jerked it towards me. "The fuck are you?" he asked. He had a heavy New Jersey accent, much much stronger than Axel's.

"Uh..." I said shakily, alarmed at how tall this man was. "I'm uh... I'm here for Axel Sinclair? I'm his peer counselor for-"

"Oh that stupid shit. Hold on." He slammed the door in my face. I heard a lot of screaming in the house before Axel popped out two minutes later, a beanie on his head, a black worn out hoodie, gray sweats, and worn-out Converse. "Roxas?" he asked. He smelled heavily of smoke. He looked around. "It's getting dark out. You trying to get mugged or something?"

"I doubt anyone is interested in four pennies and a school ID card," I assured.

He shrugged. "What do you want?"

"What do I want? Axel, I'm required to visit you here four times a week for an hour session of 'positive bonding reinforcement.'"

He rolled his eyes. "Not today I have guests."

"Well they can wait. I came to far to be postponed."

He stared at me hard, contemplating his next actions. He then looked around the street, then spotted a couple of guys coming down with guns in their pockets and red bandannas tied to their forearms. He yanked me inside and shut the door, locking the chains.

"You're only in here 'cause I don't wanna be responsible for your death. Gangs come out around this time. And you're not wearing any red. Hang around the living room for a bit. I'll come to you soon."

Red? Is that why his hair was red? And his dad's? Did they dye it that color so they wouldn't have to remember to wear red clothes?



I followed the direction he pointed me to and found three guys, all smoking something, chilling in the living room. The couches were torn up and flat. The TV was bulky like the ones they had in the nineties. They all stared at me blankly, wondering what a guy like me is doing here.

"Uh... hi," I mumbled. All of them simply turned away from me and texted on their phones.

It was crazy awkward in here. At least for me.

I heard footsteps come down from the stairs and sure enough Axel came down, a lit cigarette in his mouth, some cards, and a wad of cash. He walked past me like I wasn't there, and sat with his guests.

"Alright Demyx. No fun and games today. I'm getting my \$500 back," Axel warned.

The man who's name was apparently Demyx laughed and shook his head, rubbing his hands together quickly in anticipation. Demyx was dressed kind of like Axel. A beanie, baggy t-shirt with a heavy metal band on it, some sweats, and red Vans.

Another man with brown hair and a scar across his nose just had his eyes closed and his arms crossed, the smoke from the bud he had in his mouth floating in the air slowly. He wasn't sleeping but he was thinking.

Another girl pushed past me roughly and plopped herself next to Demyx. "I hope your sorry asses didn't try to start without me." She grinned. She had a gold canine tooth, blonde hair, and an arm of tattoos. She had no beanie on but had on a red sports bra, over-sized khaki cargo pants and skater shoes.

"Shut the fuck up, Larxene. Ain't no one worried about your ass," the brown-haired man with closed eyes mumbled. Everyone laughed.

"Man! Fuck you Leon before I fuck your face up," Larxene quickly jabbed.

"Nice to have you back, Axel. Ever since you got arrested, we don't have as many nights like these anymore," Demyx noted. Everyone cheered in agreement.

"Ayy everyone chill. My dad is upstairs and he hates loud noise," Axel reminded, decking the cards out.

"Uh, Axel? Sorry to ruin this whole poker thing you got going on but... we need to spend time together so I can put the hours in," I reminded.

Axel groaned. "No one asked you to be here today, kid. It's poker night."

"Hey who the fuck is this?" Demyx asked, jerking his chin to me.

"Some kid they gave to me," Axel mumbled, continuing to deck the cards out and smoke his cigarette.

"Lemme guess: new peer counselor? What happened to the other one?" Larxene asked.

"Kid probably was too scared to come back here after Axel caused him to get ran over," Leon laughed.

"Hey I didn't cause shit. It was his fault he got scared and ran out of the house!" Axel laughed with everyone. I broke a cold sweat. They said he had three counselors before me. If that's what happened to the last one, then what kind of vile things happened to the other two? What kind of vile things will happen to me?! What exactly could be so horrifying that it can cause a kid to run out to the street blindly and get ran over?

"Don't be mean to the poor guy he's all helpless and adorable," Leon observed. He smirked and turned to me. "How old are you kid?"

"No legal. Back off, Sir Twenty-Three year old," Axel mocked. Everyone laughed. If Leon was twenty-three then is this room full of criminal adults? Could Axel be the youngest one in here? Sure he's 18 but what is he doing hanging around people this old? In Destiny Islands a person is not a legal adult until they reach nineteen. Axel has one year left to change his ways before the state gives up on him and releases him from juvi. And the obligation to attend school.

And it was my job to help him see that.

And seeing from how this is going, I think I'm going to be as successful as the other three counselors.

"Just wait upstairs for a few. Lemme just play one game and I'll have your damn bonding time you want so bad," Axel groaned, arranging his cards in his hand. I sighed and did as he asked, not even caring that much anymore. I climbed upstairs and saw two hallways. Shit, he didn't give me the directions to his room.

Might as well explore a little.

I opened one door and saw a bathroom. Another door was full of boxes and a window. It smelled even more heavily of smoke than the rest of the house. At this rate, I'm going to catch lung cancer just from visiting here a few more times. I crept towards a half-open door and saw the man that opened the door for me, watching TV on a bulky TV, drinking beer, an ash tray covered with finished cigars next to him. The room was dark, the only light coming from the TV. There were thongs and bras and dirty boxers all over the floor and unpaid bills on the dresser. Seems like a woman also lived here.

Now that I think of it, the man looked a hell of a lot like Axel. Maybe that was his dad. Or older brother like me. Who knows. I'm bound to find out sooner or later.

I walked over to another room with a bunch of skulls placed onto the door. Caution tape draped the borders of the door and an evil Joker lied in the middle of the door. I slowly opened the door and found a regular room. The room's walls were painted red, a twin bed resided in the corner of the room with camo-designed covers. The carpet was ripping off. The one mirror in it was cracked, and the window was open, allowing a breeze to enter. I found it risky and stupid to keep a window open in this kind of neighborhood, but I don't live here. So I don't know what's right and wrong to do. A guitar kept in extremely good condition sat inside a half-open closet. It looked beautiful and brand new, even though the few scratches on the board told otherwise. I wanted to pick it up. It was the best thing this house had to offer. And I've always wanted to learn the guitar.

"Found anything you like?" Axel asked from the doorway. I jumped, quickly turning around and holding my hands up. He lightly laughed and closed the door behind him. "Everyone's downstairs, blondie. I won my \$500." He plopped down on the bed. "So what do you want?"

I cleared my throat. "Well the first meeting is suppose to be us getting to know each other."

"You think you're gonna get to know me just by asking, blondie?" Axel asked, smirking and shaking his head.

"Well... yeah. I ask questions, you ask questions. We go off from there."

"I'm not an open book, kid. You wanna get to know me? You're gonna have to move the rocks and find the gold yourself." He searched in his drawer and pulled out a cigarette. I groaned.

"Is that all you do?! Smoke and wreak havoc on society? Can you at least have courtesy and not smoke in front of me?" I snapped.

Axel raised his eyebrows. "Wow. Blondie got heart. I would listen to you if I gave a fuck. Door's that way, kid. Don't like it? Don't hang around." He lit it anyway and smirked and me, putting the cigarette in his mouth.

"By the way, stop calling me that. My name is Roxas."

"Like I give a shit."

"The attitude you consistently give people above you will get you nowhere in life."

"People above me?" Axel scoffed, blinking repeatedly.

"Yes! You're intimidated by those smarter or better than you, so you demonstrate your power by causing chaos to the order of our community. That way, no one bothers you and you can continue to look tough and carefree, when in fact, deep down you probably fear something. Something you don't want anyone to know. Because *everyone*... fears something."

It was silent for a moment.

And then Axel burst out laughing, clapping his hands. "Ain't no one better than me! Blondie, you're funny man! It's not that I'm some stupid, ignorant child who can't do better than pickpocket people on the street. I'm fully aware of the consequences of my actions."

"So then why do you do them?!" I shouted.

"Because I'm waiting for the day where someone actually *cares*!" Axel yelled. It got awkwardly quiet. Axel sighed and laid down on the bed. "Ask your fucking questions, blondie."

"So uh..." I mumbled, feeling a little guilty I attacked Axel like that. "What made you start smoking?"

"I just wanted to. It's like a slow suicide. Next question." Translation: I'm not elaborating on that because it's none of your fucking business.

I cleared my throat. "That man that answered the door, is he-"

"My dad. If he made you cry it's not my business. He doesn't really have a heart."

"He didn't make me cry..."

"Oh. Well he did with the other three."

I pointed over to the guitar. "When did you start playing?"

He stared at the guitar, and then looked down to the floor, putting his hands in his hoodie's pockets, continuing to smoke his cigarette. "None of your concern," he muttered, his face turning a little red.

You know, now that I think of it, Axel didn't look half bad. In fact, he was actually really attractive. If it wasn't for his alarming red hair, bad attitude, and tall stature you would think he was just some soft-spoken, insecure boy.

"Is your naturally red?" I asked.

He gave me a what-the-fuck face. "Who in this entire planet has naturally flame red hair?"

"So why did you dye it such a bright red?"

"It attracts attention. And evokes emotion out of people. Good and bad. Which is what I want. Plus, I don't have to worry about wearing any red article of clothing 'cause my hair handles it." He jerked his chin to me. "Why you so curious?"

"Oh, well I saw your dad with the same color hair but a little more dull and I just wondered if it was your real hair color."

"His just faded. But it's dyed too." He looked me over. "You're not so bad, blondie. Not saying I like you, but you're not so bad."

I smiled a little. I'm fitting in already?

I heard a door slam open from downstairs, and immediate screaming. "What the fuck are you bitch asses doing in my house?! GET THE FUCK OUTTA HERE BEFORE I RIP YOUR THROATS OPEN AND SELL IT FOR CRACK MONEY! OUT! NOW!"

A bunch of footsteps were heard along with murmuring. "Shit," Axel muttered, rubbing his eyes warily. "She's home."

Loud thuds became louder as the woman approached upstairs. She kicked Axel's door open. A cigarette resided in her right hand. "You! What the fuck did I tell you the last time you brought these shiteads to my house?! No gambling! Do it again I'll throw you out the window! The fuck is wrong with you?! I know you're a dumbass but are ya fucking retarded?! Do ya want me to murder you?! God, you're just like your deadbeat father! You don't do shit here! I fucking hate you. When are you gonna get a job so you can leave my house? I'm only obligated to take care of ya for one more year, bitch. Make it last, you fucking cunt. And who the fuck are you?" she shouted, jerking her chin at me and putting her cig in her mouth, smoking it, and then pulling it back out.

I was taken by surprise. I stuttered nervously. "Me? I, uh... er..." I mumbled.

"He's my new peer counselor mom. Get off his back," Axel mumbled, continuing to look down at the floor.

"The fuck did you say to me?!" she shouted. She ran over to Axel and punched him hard. Axel winced and clutched his face. "Talk back to me again and see if I don't use my shoe the next time! And you kid! If I catch you gambling here once I will toss you outta here to fend for yourself with the gangs outside, CAPEESH?!" she screamed.

I nodded, sweating from anxiety.

The lady had a hard New Jersey accent like Axel's dad. But her hair wasn't red. It was blonde. She had the same green eyes as her family, long acrylic red nails, a tattoo of a tiger on her left shoulder, and smeared red lipstick from probably doing dirty work outside. She was dressed like a hooker.

"Fuck outta here with all this shit. I'm so fucking tired of it," she grumbled, and she slammed the door shut and started screaming at Axel's dad.

"Axel? Are you..."

"That was my mom Elena. And you met my dad Reno. Congrats, you know the family. Let's not talk about this again." He continued to rub his face. His eye was luckily spared but his cheek looked a bit swollen and bruised. Seems like the mom wasn't quite strong but had a hand.

"Nice people," I retorted quietly. The sound of a beer bottle slamming on Axel's door made me flinch. But Axel was not shaken.

He looked down. "I don't know why they made me leave juvi for this," he muttered, not knowing I could hear him. I figured right now wasn't a good time to talk, as things were pretty heated in the house.

"I think I should go now," I said slowly.

"Let me walk you to the bus stop. It's dark out," Axel offered.

"No no, it's fine."

"It wasn't an option." He glared at me hard. I found it odd how his act of kindness came off as threatening. And sure enough he followed me down the street, easing past suspicious looking people and even exchanging handshakes with a few of them. When we reached the bus stop, he turned around without saying anything.

"Hey wait!" I called.

He turned. "What?" he asked, annoyance in his voice.

I smiled. "Thank you."

He stared at me for a bit, wondering whether he should reply or not, and then just turned back around and walked home. I sighed. I feel like Axel isn't a complete lost cause. I just feel like you... I don't know...

Uncover the right rocks to find the gold.